

Lectio Divina

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What is it?

Lectio divina (lex-e-oh di-veen-ah or (lek-ti-oh di-veen-ah) is Latin for “divine reading” or “sacred reading” and has actually been a part of church life for centuries! This practice was developed by the Church in the first 1500 years of its history, and is recently being rediscovered. The first 1500 years of church history was characterized by this practice. Many people in the early church were illiterate or did not have Bibles, so *lectio divina* offered a way of listening to Scripture that would stay in the mind and resonate in the heart throughout the day. *Lectio divina* is a structure of prayer that uses Scripture and silence to be attentive to God’s presence and direction into our lives. Lectio Divina brings together biblical practices of prayer and applies them to a biblical text. This way the Bible forms not only our thoughts but our hearts – we not only learn to think biblically, but we learn to relate to God according to the example expressed in the passage. In *lectio divina* we discover that there is no place in our hearts – no interior corner or closet – that cannot be opened and offered to God.

Lectio divina is much like tuning the radio to your favorite station and singing the song you hear the rest of the day. By really listening to the Scripture as it is read slowly and deliberately, and letting it soak in during a time of silence, you learn to tune your heart to the “gentle whisper” of God (I Kings 19:12).

We understand what wind is by feeling it blow in our face. We know what snow is like when we make a snowball or watch snowflakes collect on our mittens. This sort of knowing transcends the intellect; it is direct, sensate and experiential. Devotional reading, or *lectio divina*, invites us into this kind of knowing.

We know it is vital to study the Bible for solid content and doctrinal truth, but it is just as important to learn how to meditate on the Word and allow it to permeate our lives and the decisions we make. When we listen to God’s Word with our hearts in this way, we can’t help but draw closer to the heart of Christ and be transformed and renewed by the Living Word of God.

How do we do it?

There are several variations to the practice and it can be done individually or as a group. Before you begin:

- Find a quiet time and place.
- Be relaxed and comfortable.
- Choose your passage (a single psalm, or episode, or even verse).

Individual Lectio Divina:

Quiet preparation of the heart (*silencio*): Come into God's presence, slow down, relax, and intentionally release the chaos and noise in your mind to him.

Read the Word (*lectio*): Read a Scripture passage slowly out loud, lingering over the words so that they resonate in your heart. Let it sink in. When a word or phrase catches your attention, don't keep reading. Stop and attend to what God is saying to you. Be open to the Word. Don't analyze it or judge it. Listen and wait.

Meditate (*meditatio*): Read the Scripture a second time out loud. Savor the words. Listen for any invitation that God is extending to you in this Word. Reflect on the importance of the words that light up to you. Like Mary, who pondered the Word in her heart, gently explore the ramifications of God's invitation.

Verbal Response (*oratio*): Read the Scripture a third time. Now is the moment to enter into a personal dialogue with God. There is no right or wrong way to do this. The important thing is to respond truthfully and authentically. What feelings has the text aroused in you? Identify where you are resistant or want to push back. Become aware of where you feel invited into a deeper way of being with God. Talk to God about these feelings.

Rest (*contemplatio*): Rest and wait in the presence of God. Allow some time for the Word to sink deeply into your soul. Yield and surrender yourself to God. Before you leave, you might consider a reminder that can help you dwell with this Word throughout the day.

Close with the Lord's Prayer, or by asking the Lord for the grace to experience God through this text and exercise throughout the day.

Group Lectio Divina:

Read the passage aloud four times – slowly and deliberately. Allow for a time of silence between each reading.

Quiet Yourself/Silencio: Sit quietly for a minute or two to calm the distractions.

Read/Lectio: On the first reading, simply listen to the words read aloud.

Reflect/Meditatio: On the second reading, each person silently reflects on the question: *What in the passage touches my life today?* (There is no discussion within the group.)

Respond/Oratio: After the third reading, ask yourself, *What is God inviting me to do today?*

Rest/Contemplatio: During the fourth and final reading, ask nothing; simply rest in the presence of the Lord and experience His guidance through the Word.

Share*: Share what God has spoken to you through His Word. (*There is never an obligation to share with your group. This deepens the experience for everyone in the group.)

Pray: Close by praying that each person would walk in the power of the living Word revealed.

Group Lectio Divina is adapted from Be Still by Bill Donahue and Judge & Amy Reinhold

This is a basic explanation of the practice of Lectio Divina to get you started. It may be helpful to share your experience with a trusted friend and try group Lectio Divina in a small group setting. There is significant value in using this spiritual practice as you grow deeper in your relationship with God.